

THE MINOR
ENGLISH POEMS
OF
JOHN MILTON

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
H. C. BEECHING

FIFTEENTH EDITION



METHUEN & CO. LTD. LONDON

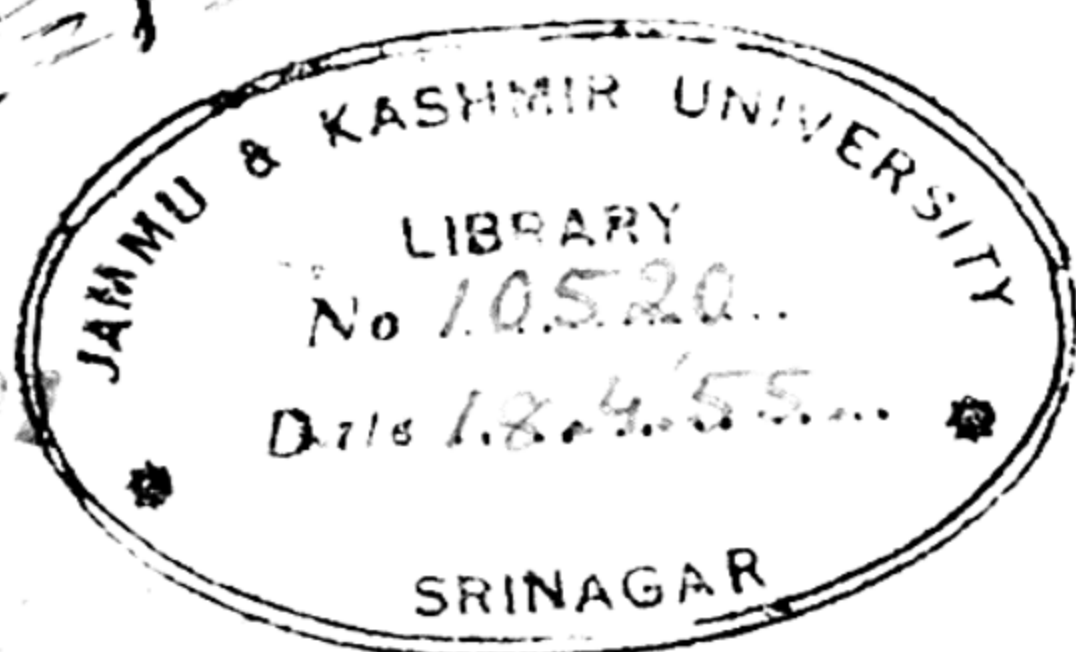
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This edition was first published August 14th, 1903

It has been reprinted fourteen times

Fifteenth edition, 1948



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CATALOGUE NO. 7417/U

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INTRODUCTION

THE lover of the muse who strolled into Humphrey Moseley's shop at the sign of the Prince's Arms in St Paul's Churchyard, on New Year's Day 1645-46, would have had put into his hands a pretty little volume entitled "Poems of Mr John Milton, both English and Latin, composed at several times." If he were the fortunate possessor of the "Comus," brought out in 1637 by Mr Henry Lawes, "of His Majesty's private musick," or the collection of elegies upon Mr Edward King, issued from Cambridge in the following year, he would lose no time in paying the price of the new volume, and hurrying home with it to see whether the new wine was as delicious as the old. But if he only knew of Milton as the writer of certain antinomian pamphlets upon Divorce, and opened the volume with some hesitation, he would hardly be reassured by the grim and forbidding face that looked out at him from the engraved portrait. If, however, his eye caught the Greek inscription below it, he would burst out laughing and think better of Mr Milton, and probably buy the book, having explained the joke to the surprised bookseller. The joke was this. Milton, being naturally incensed at the absurd caricature of his very handsome face, had given the

engraver, William Marshall, some Greek verses to introduce into the framework of the portrait, and these, cut by him in all good faith, were anything but complimentary to his skill. Two interesting features of this edition may be noticed. There is a preface from "The Stationer to the Reader," written by Moseley, in which he takes credit for "soliciting" Milton's papers from him, being attracted by "the author's more peculiar excellency in these studies," and encouraged by the favourable reception of his recent edition of "Mr Waller's Choice Pieces." He takes credit also for his motive in publication. "It is not any private respect of gain, Gentle Reader, for the slightest pamphlet is now a-dayes more vendible then the works of learnedst men, but it is the love I have to our own language that hath made me diligent to collect and set forth such peeces, both in prose and vers, as may renew the wonted honour and esteem of our English tongue." For once we may believe "the Stationer"; for Moseley followed up his editions of Waller and Milton by an edition of Crashaw's "Steps to the Temple" the following year, and Vaughan's "Olor Iscanus" in 1650; though he missed the honour of introducing to the world Herrick's "Hesperides" in 1648. A second point of interest about the 1645 edition of Milton's poems is the motto he placed upon the title-page :

Baccare frontem

Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro,

from the seventh eclogue of Virgil. The words there belong to Thyrsis, the Arcadian poet,

who is defeated in his contest with Corydon, and they are an ironical protest against over-praise. "Wreathe my brow with bacchar (some herb supposed to avert the evil eye) lest the evil tongue injure the future poet." To understand Milton's adoption of the motto it will be sufficient to recall the opening lines of "Lycidas." In his estimation, all that he has yet written is but a prelude to the great poem which is one day to be.

The earliest piece in the book is "a paraphrase of Psalm cxiv," and we notice that even in these lines "don by the author at fifteen years old," he has already ceased to be amateurish. Henry Vaughan at sixty did not write so well as Milton at fifteen. Milton was born with a marvellously fine ear for rhythm, and he cultivated it assiduously, by the study of the best models. Obviously here his model is Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. But the paraphrase is more than a mere version of the Psalm in heroic metre, it is a paraphrase rekindled by imagination. See how the epithet "shivering" gives a picture of the sea in flight, and how the epithet "faint" calls up a picture of the wearied combatants in retreat. (Poets may be well studied in their epithets.) One or two of the epithets here, like "froth-becalmed," are in the fantastic taste of the day, but that at least is picturesque; the rest—"clear streams," "glassy floods," "soft rills"—are conventional, but they are all in place. As prophets, then, after the event, we may safely predict for our young poet a considerable future. (The other Psalm is well known from certain of its verses, which are still

sung, and from its refrain. And how successful the refrain is as a metrical rendering of "For His mercy endureth for ever," how much superior, for instance, to the jerky version of Sandys :

For from the King of Kings
Eternal mercy springs.

In this Psalm, also, we may remark the epithets, some of which are already in the tone that we now recognise as Miltonic, "his *thunder-clasping* hand," "the *tawny* King" (Pharaoh), "the *over-hardy* crew" of Og.

The "Ode on the Death of a fair Infant dying of a Cough," written at seventeen, and "The Vacation Exercise," two years later, were not printed until the second edition of the poems in 1673. The former being the earliest original flight necessarily displays more symptoms of youth than the paraphrases. The suggestion that Winter was indignant at being unmarried, saw the fair Infant, fell in love, and killed it with a kiss does not fit on to the rest of the poem, and is in itself a little ridiculous. The idea might have been tolerable if the poet had stopped with the mere hint in the first stanza, but all the detail of circumstance in what follows makes the absurdity too palpable. We recognise thus early that among all the gifts of genius showered upon the poet in his cradle, the gift of humour was not one. But even so, if the invention be neglected, and regard be paid solely to the dressing of the ideas and the versification, we can give the poem little but praise. We see at once that young Milton has been reading Shakespeare,

and amid so much contemporary praise of Jonson and Fletcher, that in itself is a pleasant discovery. We see too that the metrical inspiration comes from Spenser. The first stanza is a beautiful piece of writing :

O fairest flower no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly ;
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst out-lasting
Bleak winter's force that made thy blossom dry ;
For he being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But kill'd alas, and then bewailed his fatal bliss.

In the fourth stanza we may remark an effective repetition, to be used again in " Lycidas " ; and in the tenth an admirable couplet, of which the sound answers to the sense :

To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence
Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence.

The reference is to the terrible mortality in 1625 due to the Plague, which is said to have carried off 35,000 persons in London alone. The " infant " celebrated in the poem was the little daughter of the poet's sister, Anne Phillips. " The Vacation Exercise " is interesting biographically as containing thus early an expression of the high uses to which, in Milton's judgment, poetry should be dedicated ; and with all its undergraduate cleverness and classical reminiscences, there is distinctly audible the new music that Milton was finding or fashioning in English. " Yet I had rather," he says, speaking to his native language,

Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound :
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heav'n's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To th' touch of golden wires.

But the flower of Milton's academic writing is the "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," written in 1629, the year in which the poet came of age and took his degree. The stanza in which the hymn is written is a contrivance of the poet's own, and it is excellent. There are two or three stanzas of the hymn, such as the 2nd, 6th, and 7th, which are in the artificial mode of the time, but the poem as a whole is remarkably free from such hyperbolic conceits. The true Miltonic manner is seen in such a stanza as the third, which expresses in an imaginative and picturesque form what was, or was supposed to be, an historic fact at the moment ; the peace that overspread the Roman Empire.

But He her fears to cease
Sent down the meek-ey'd Peace,
She crown'd with olive green came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle ring the amorous clouds dividing,
And waving wide her myrtle wand
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

It has been suggested that Milton, when he wrote this stanza, had in mind some mask of

the period, in which such a descent was represented ; and it is likely enough. But Milton's imagination, even at twenty-one, was not dependent upon what other poets had imagined before him. His power of firm and vivid and picturesque imagination—always a characteristic of his genius—is well illustrated by the detail in the stanza that follows, especially the grand picture in the concluding couplet :

No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around,
The idle spear and shield were high up hung ;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng ;
And Kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was nigh.

The fifth stanza again is a fine example of Milton's skill in using language.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began :
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed
wave.

It is obvious here to notice the success of the onomatopœic effects—first the hushing sound of the sibilant and liquid consonants, then the way in which the word “whispering” gives the ruffling of the surface by the wind ; and in the concluding line the somnolent influence of the broad

vowels. Other excellent examples come in the stanzas describing the supersession of the old gods, where the various notes of "lamentation and mourning and woe" are finely discriminated. But in the present writer's judgment, the most perfect thing in these perfect stanzas is the epithet "pale" applied to the poplar, which not only satisfies the naturalist by its truth, and the classical scholar by a multitude of reminiscences, but also suggests the *frisson* in the leaves shivering with fear, as "they felt the new law." Hallam called this ode "perhaps the finest ode in the English language"; and if style only be looked at, his judgment could hardly be disputed. But the substance is not on a level with the style; how could it be, considering the writer's age? The best and best known sections, those describing the decay of oracles, do not answer to any facts of nature or experience; and throughout the poem it is only the picturesque accessories of the Nativity that are dwelt upon.

The lack of matter on so high a theme, natural at so early an age, is still more conspicuous in the ode on "the Passion," which got no further than the exordium. A note is appended. "This subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished." Though probably of somewhat later date than the Nativity ode, the poem on "the Passion" is much fuller of the tasteless faults of the time, and the subject is one where they are even less in place. What could be more frigid than the conceit in the fifth verse?

The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
And letters, where my tears have washed, a wannish
white.

The eighth and last verse is so intolerable, it is no wonder the poet stopped writing; the wonder is he should have published what he had written. In the mass of Spenserian imitation we may distinguish one line worthy of Keats :

But headlong joy is ever on the wing.

The couplets "on Shakespeare" belong to the same year, 1630, as the poem on "the Passion," and they reveal the same transient surrender to the taste for extravagance in imagery. The great dramatist's words lie buried in his readers' hearts, and makes them think so hard, that they become petrified by the effort, and so become his sepulchre and monument. The earlier part of the poem is worthy of a better ending. What could be nobler in expression than Milton's version of the common boast that Poetry will outlast the Pyramids.

What needs my Shakespear for his honour'd bones
The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing Pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.

In a different vein are the epitaphs on the famous Cambridge carrier Hobson, who, in Milton's terse and expressive phrase, "sicken'd in the time of his vacancy, being forbid to go

to London by reason of the plague." In these pieces Milton shows us that though in general he lacked humour, he could on occasion make a pun with the best.

Rest that gives all man life gave him his death,
And too much breathing put him out of breath ;
Nor were it contradiction to affirm
Too long vacation hastened on his term.

} , 7 But the puns are the worst part of these admirable compositions. They display also a certain imaginative humour at once grim and kindly. The picture of Death as Chamberlain is worthy of the pencil of Holbein. Excellent too in a more academic vein is the comparison of Hobson's finding life in motion to the movement of the spheres, which will only cease to move at the dissolution of all things.

Made of sphere-metal, never to decay
Until his revolution was at stay.

And still better is the comparison of his progress to and from Cambridge, year in and year out, with the ebb and flow of the tide :

Obedient to the moon he spent his date
In course reciprocal, and had his fate
Linkt to the mutual flowing of the seas.

" The Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester " is Milton's first poem in that octosyllabic metre in which he was presently to compose his twin masterpieces, " L'Allegro " and " Il Penseroso." Its date is probably pretty nearly that of the event to which it refers, which took place 15th April 1631. The feudal respect

for nobility which still survived in England may be reckoned some excuse for the appalling line with which the poem concludes ; but even contemporaries with any humour must have considered that the young Cambridge poet had overshot the mark. Old Ben Jonson, who presented a tribute on the melancholy occasion, struck a note that we find more congenial,

She was the Lady Jane and Marchioness
Of Winchester,—the heralds can tell this,—
Earl Rivers' grandchild ! Serve not forms, good
Fame ;
Sound thou her *virtues*, give her *soul* a name ;

and his conclusion on the Christian hope of immortality has more human sympathy in it than Milton's far-fetched comparison with the death of Rachel, especially as Benjamin survived his mother's death, whereas the Lady Jane's baby did not. But human sympathy was never a strong point with Milton. The comparison of the mother's death to the plucking up by the roots of a plant,

by some unheedy swain,
Who only thought to crop the flower,

is even less happy ; for to "crop a flower" is to kill it, not to bring it to birth. But from line 47 onwards the poem rises into an exquisite music that recalls the sweetest notes of Fletcher

Gentle lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have ;
After this thy travail sore
Sweet rest seize thee evermore,

That to give the world increase
Shortened hast thy own life's lease ;
Here besides the sorrowing
That thy noble house doth bring,
Here be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon :
And some flowers, and some bays,
'Fore thy hearse to strew the ways,
Sent thee from the banks of Came,
Devoted to thy virtuous name.

The poem "On Time," described in the Cambridge manuscript as "to be set on a clock case," does not call for particular comment. We may note the irregular metre as a sign of Italian influence, and the three double epithets in so short a piece as a sign of early work. But we cannot fail also to notice the skill with which the slow pace of Time is indicated by the slow movement of the opening lines. The two stanzas "Upon the Circumcision" contain one admirable couplet,

He who with all Heav'n's heraldry whilere
Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease.

The piece is partially spoilt by a conceit worthy of the least inspired moments of Crashaw ; but again the exordium is splendid, and the rhythm of the stanza is woven together into a close and single whole. "At a Solemn Music" is solemn and musical to suit its subject. (Tennyson called Milton the "organ voice of England," and his deeper and more solemn tones, which here are prophetically exemplified, could not be better described. The Cambridge manuscript of this poem lets us in to some of the secret of Milton's "slow endeavouring art" by preserving the

various stages through which the magnificent 11th line climbed to its present perfection. It first ran "their loud immortal trumpets blow"; then "loud symphony of silver trumpets blow"; then "high-lifted, loud, and angel trumpets blow," and finally, as it stands in the printed text, "their loud up-lifted angel trumpets blow." The last line passed through even more variations, and only at the last did Milton change "To live and sing with Him," into "live with Him, and sing," which is so very much finer. If the lines "At a Solemn Music" suggest the "Il Penseroso" of three years later, the "L'Allegro" is also heralded by the delightfully fresh and buoyant "Song on May Morning." This was Milton's sole attempt in the Elizabethan manner, and it is proof enough that it was already too late a day to recapture the "wood-note wild" of that incomparable dawn. What we have instead is as beautiful in its way, but it is not the suggestive and magical way of Shakespeare. We may contrast such songs as "When daisies pied" or "When daffodils begin to peer," every word of which tingles with the Spring, with the clear-cut and exquisite image of May throwing flowers from her lap.

Of the contrasted pair of poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," that is, the cheerful and the contemplative man, we may conjecture that the latter was written first, both because it has forerunners in Beaumont's song "Hence all you vain delights," and in some lines by Burton "On the pains and pleasures of melancholy"; and also because the couplet in "L'Allegro,"

Sometime walking *not unseen*
By hedgerow elms or hillocks green,

seems to have reference to the corresponding line in "Il Penseroso":

And missing thee I walk *unseen*,

which again seems borrowed from Burton's

Unheard, unsought for, and *unseen*.

The point is of no great importance. The commentators upon these poems are more than usually diverting. One takes each poem as representing an actual day. Another shies at this, and says no living person could cram so many gaieties into one evening as are described at the end of "L'Allegro." To which rejoinder is made that the plays of Jonson and Shakespeare could be read indoors; but that surely would be to trespass upon the methods of "Il Penseroso." Without going too deeply into such questions, it may suffice to point out that what the poet actually does is to describe a typical day in a poetical season made up of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In "L'Allegro," for example, it would be difficult to find any day in the ordinary calendar which could combine the huntsman of l. 53, out with the hounds when the hoar-frost is on the hill, and the mower of l. 66. By l. 85 you are at mid-day dinner. Then in l. 93 you assume it to be a holiday, so that dancing has been going on all day instead of work, and so it continues till nightfall; which brings with it the

feast and tales and at last bed. Thus ends the day in the country. In town it will have been spent otherwise : at the joust, or the play, or a concert. (The *then* of l. 117 must be alternative, "at another time.") "Il Penseroso," as befits, opens not with the lark, but with the nightingale ; not with sunrise, but moonrise ; not with the hunter's horn, but the curfew. Then the student passes into the house and spends the night among his books, with Hermes Trismegistus and the alchemists, or Plato and the philosophers, or with the Greek tragedians, or indeed any modern tragedian worth study. (Let us hope Milton meant Shakespeare.) So the night passes, and day drives the student out-of-doors into the woods, where he falls asleep. That is roughly the framework of these poems.

Now, what is the intended contrast between them ? Is it a contrast between Cavalier and Puritan, or again, between the sensual and spiritual principles ? Certainly it is not the latter, for the pleasures of the *Allegro* are spoken of as "unreproved" and "free" ; and there was no more sacred word than "free" in Milton's vocabulary. Notice also that it is Mirth, and not Melancholy, that leads "the mountain nymph sweet Liberty" ; the idea possibly being that there can be no genuine mirth among any but a free people. If it were the former contrast that was in Milton's mind, we should expect him to make out a better case for the *Penseroso* than he does. He describes a man who has but little commerce with nature. He takes his walks abroad at night, and in the daytime retires to the shade and goes to sleep.

He is better pleased with "trim gardens" than with green fields and with his book than either. It is pretty clear, therefore, that what Milton is contrasting is not so much two men as two moods of the same man, himself; and he is not pitting one against the other, but describing them both. The way in which each mood bans its opposite—"Hence vain deluding Joys"—"Hence loathed Melancholy"—is very true to nature; in one mood nothing seems so absurd as the other.

The most striking feature of these two poems is their graceful landscape. The word was new in English, it came in with the Dutch painters—and so was the thing. Where before Milton are there to be found such backgrounds to the human picture as this from "L'Allegro":

Towers and battlements it sees
 Bosomed high in tufted trees,
 (Where perhaps some beauty lies
 The cynosure of neighbouring eyes).
 Hard by a cottage chimney smokes
 From betwixt two aged oaks,
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
 Are at their savoury dinner set;

or the still more beautiful passage in "Il Penseroso":

I walk unseen
 On the dry smooth-shaven green
 To behold the wandering moon
 Riding near her highest noon,
 Like one that had been led astray
 Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
 And oft, as if her head she bowed,
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.

In Milton's study of nature we do not get

what we find in Vaughan or in Wordsworth, any sense of a divine life working through phenomena; or what we have in Tennyson, acute observation and vivid representation of particular beauties. We get broad and vivid effects of landscape, rendered with intense feeling. Critics have not been slow to point out inaccuracies. Much fun has been made of the passage in "L'Allegro," l. 45, where the poet makes the lark come to his window; a thing which no lark that ever lived could be induced to do. And, of course, the poem is the worse for such inaccuracy. But the details we can quarrel with are very few; and the greater things of nature, such as "the wandering moon" in the passage above quoted, are rendered with a truth and an emotion that bring them still home to our imaginations, when our photographic poets give us little content.

These poems are not found in the Cambridge manuscript, so that we have no information as to their date, and consequently we have none as to the place of their composition. It has been generally assumed, and with much probability, that they were written at Horton, near Windsor, where Milton spent five or six years after leaving Cambridge. The "towers and battlements" seem to be those of Windsor Castle, and perhaps the "high embowed roof" may be that of St George's Chapel; although it may be merely a reminiscence of Cambridge days. A word may be added as to the admirable way in which Milton adapts his metre to the peculiar requirements of the two poems. The ground metre is an iambic line of eight

syllables. To this a trochaic effect can be given by cutting off the initial syllable,—a practice common with Chaucer, as in the lines

Go faste | unto | the gret | ð se ;
Go | now fast | and hye | thee blyve.

In "L'Allegro" where the trochaic effect, as more tripping and cheerful, is more required, there are not a few couplets which have not only lost the short syllable at the beginning, but have taken one on at the end, thus becoming completely trochaic. Others have the extra syllable at the end, without discarding the initial syllable.

Straight | mine eye | hath caught | new pleas | ures
While | the land | skip round | it meas | ures.

Of herbs | and oth | er coun | try mess | es
Which the | neat hand | ed Phil | lis dress | es.

Of the 152 lines in "L'Allegro," 53 are trochaic ; of the 176 in "Il Penseroso," only 28.))

"Arcades" is in Milton's own words "part of an entertainment presented to the Countess-Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some noble persons of her family." The piece stands first in the Cambridge manuscript, and may with probability be ascribed to 1633. It is written with exact metrical care, as for music, and as no one but Milton could have written it ; but it is not interesting. It is but a faint prelude to the glories of "Comus." It would hardly be untrue to say that it borrows what interest it possesses from the great lady in whose honour it was written. By birth she was a Spencer, the youngest of the three daughters of Sir

John Spenser of Althorpe who are celebrated by the poet Spencer in "Colin Clouts Come Home Again."

No less praise worthie are the sisters three
 The honour of the noble familie,
 Of which I meanest boast myself to be.
 And most that unto them I am so nie ;
 Phyllis, Charillis and sweet Amaryllis
 Phyllis, the fair, is eldest of the three ;
 The next to her is beautiful Charillis ;
 But the youngest is the highest in degree.

As Lady Strange, wife of Ferdinando Lord Strange, eldest son of the fourth Earl of Derby, she received the dedication of "The Tears of the Muses." After her husband's death she married Sir Thomas Egerton, Elizabeth's lord-keeper, afterwards Lord Ellesmere, whose son, afterwards advanced to the earldom of Bridgewater, had already married one of her daughters. It was this Earl of Bridgewater before whom "Comus" was presented. The Dowager Lady Derby lived to a patriarchal age, and was celebrated by most of the poets of her day. Henry Lawes the musician, who was a friend of Milton's, was a tutor to the Bridgewater family ; and it was probably by him that Milton was asked to supply the *libretto* for the masks. Milton's great mask of "Comus," as we have learned to call it, though in his own editions and in the Cambridge manuscript it is called simply "a mask," was "presented at Ludlow Castle, 1643, before the Earl of Bridgewater, Lord President of Wales." It was first published by Lawes without Milton's name in 1637,¹

¹The title page is : "A maske presented at Ludlow.

with a preface which was reprinted in Milton's first edition of 1645. Lawes says of the *Mask* in his preface that it was "so lovely and so much desired that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view." He tells us also that the part of *Thyrsis* had been taken by himself, and that of the *Elder Brother* by the Earl of Bridgewater's eldest son, the young Lord Brackley, to whom he dedicates the book. The *Younger Brother* and the *Lady* were represented by two others of the children, Mr Thomas Egerton and Lady Alice. The edition of 1637 came into the hands of the venerable Sir Henry Wotton, then Provost of Eton, whose life is known to all lovers of literature from Izaak Walton's biography; and a presentation copy from the poet himself revealed to Wotton the name of the author. The letter which he wrote to Milton in acknowledgment was prefixed to the poem in the 1645 edition, and it is reprinted here. One sentence of it contains an expression which it would be impossible to beat as a characterisation of the songs in the

Castle, 1634, on Michaelmas night, before the Right Honourable John, Earle of Bridgewater, Viscount Brackley, Lord President of Wales, and one of his Majesties most honourable Privy Counsell.

"*Eheu quid volui misero mihi ! floribus austrum
Perditus.*"

[i.e., "Alas, for my wretched madness, what have I done? I have let in the hot wind upon my blossoms!" It seems to be public criticism that Milton compares to the sirocco.]

Mask—"wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a *certain Doric delicacy* in your Songs and Odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: *ipsa mollities*." It will be remembered that the writer of the lines "On his Mistress the Queen of Bohemia" was no bad judge of what an ode should be.

The most striking difference between Milton's Mask and those of the Jacobean writers is its length. The longest of Ben Jonson's does not exceed 250 lines, and Milton's runs to over a thousand. Another difference lies in its serious motive, and it is probably this seriousness of intention which led him to model his mask upon the form of Greek tragedy¹ (a point which seems to have struck Sir Henry Wotton, who speaks of "the *tragical* part") and to adopt blank verse, instead of the rhyme which in masks was universal. A typical mask is that which is introduced by Shakespeare into the "Tempest," and it is obvious to notice how different is the spirit of that interlude from the "Comus." The story of two brothers wandering in search of a lost sister, who had fallen into the power of an enchantress, was borrowed by Milton from Peele's "Old Wives' Tale"; and for the character of Comus, who was not known to classical mythology, he was probably indebted to a Latin play by a Dutchman Puteanus; moreover, commentators have shown that the poet gives evidence in his piece

¹Notice e.g. the Prologue, and the Stichomythia, ll. 277-290.

of having read the works of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, as well as many of his own compatriots, such as Spenser, Giles Fletcher, and William Browne. The episode of Sabrina, introduced to give local colour to the Mask, for the Severn flows by Ludlow Castle, shows that Milton had studied "The Faithful Shepherdess," and had profited by his study. Nevertheless the voice to which the players gave utterance on that Michaelmas night of 1634 was a new voice. Every line in the Mask is pure Milton, and every line is beautiful.¶

"Comus" was the first poem of Milton's to be given to the world, if we except the lines on Shakespeare prefixed to the Second Folio (1632); the second was "Lycidas," which appeared in 1638 in a volume printed at Cambridge and entitled as to its first part "Justa Edouardo King naufrago, ab amicis mœrentibus, amoris & μνείας Χάριν," and as to its second, "Obsequies to the memorie of Mr Edward King, Anno Dom. 1638." The first part consisted of twenty-three poems in Latin and Greek, the second of thirteen pieces in English, the last of which is "Lycidas." They were dedicated to the memory of a fellow of Milton's college, Christ's College, Cambridge, who had been drowned off the Welsh coast, while on a visit to his relatives in Ireland, by the vessel's striking on a rock. The shipwreck took place on 10th August, 1637, and "Lycidas" in Milton's manuscript is dated November in that year. Interlined between the title "Lycidas" and the first line of the poem is this note: "In

this Monodie the author bewails a lerned freind unfortunately drownd in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas 1637.”) The clause which followed this, when the poem was included in the 1645 collection, is not found in the manuscript. (It is unnecessary to detail here the achievements of Mr King; they seem to have been in no way out of the common. Poetical “obsequies” were the fashion, and Milton probably joined in the celebration at the urgency of his old College friends.) But having undertaken to write a monody, we can understand that, being Milton, he must necessarily make it a monody worthy of himself and the English tongue. The Greek language had the famous lament for Bion, Latin had Catullus’s lyrical cry over his dead brother, English so far had nothing but Spenser’s verses on Sir Philip Sidney, which are of no very high merit. The opportunity therefore was a great one, and it must be allowed that Milton made the most of it. (It would be unfair to the poem to look in it for any expressions of such personal sorrow as has made household words of some half-dozen stanzas of the “In Memoriam.” There is no evidence to show that Milton had felt more affection for young King than for any other undergraduate among his contemporaries; and they may not have met since Milton left Cambridge five years before. King, however, had written verses, though bad ones; and he contemplated taking holy orders; here were two points that could be used to make the poem both personal to King, and of interest to the poet. For the rest, the poet would not be

wanting in suitable reflections, and in an elegy upon a classical student the classical mythology could be utilised. Milton's scheme in the poem must be allowed to be admirable. Adopting the pastoral convention, and using the name of Lycidas, familiar in both Theocritus and Virgil, he as a friendly shepherd—some Menelaus or Daphnis,—first calls the muses to lament for their dead votary, and then makes Neptune hold a court of inquiry into the shipwreck, which gives occasion to that splendid pageant of marine figures which concludes with Camus and "the pilot of the Galilean lake"; the dignity of whose appearance is universally recognised, though the appropriateness of their watery trappings must not be too closely looked into. The penultimate strophe in which the valleys are bidden to throw together their flowers for the hearse, followed by the recollection that the hearse is empty, is indubitably the finest passage in the poem, and discovers real feeling.

Ay me, whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away.

The poem concludes with a recognition that "through the dear might of Him that walked the waves," Lycidas is not dead, but has become "the Genius of the shore."

The structure, then, of the poem calls for praise. But it is not the structure of the poem that has won for it so many generations of readers. Possibly few of its admirers could make a plan of its construction. Nor again does its success depend upon the beauty, or dignity, or interest or the thought. The attack on the

English clergy and the section upon Fame are the only passages that could stand as "criticism of life," and they are not especially effective. What has made the success of the poem and what will keep it immortal is the beauty of the writing. Every word has been weighed and is the absolutely right word in its place; every line has been measured and is absolutely right in itself, and in its place in the strophe; and the several strophes succeed each other with an inevitableness of sequence.) As to the process by which this final perfection was reached we have most interesting evidence in the manuscript to which reference has already several times been made.¹ There we are allowed to see the successive stages through which certain passages reached their present form. ([Charles Lamb, it will be remembered, resented the preservation of the manuscript. "I had thought of the 'Lycidas'," he says,² "as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in an evil hour, I was shown the original copy of it, together with the other minor poems of the author, in the library of Trinity, kept like some treasure to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them into the Cam. . . How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected! as if their words were mortal,

¹It is preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge, and has recently been facsimiled under the care of the Vice-master, Dr Aldis Wright.

²This passage, which formed part of a note to the essay on "Oxford in the Vacation" when it appeared in the *London Magazine*, was not reprinted; probably as having nothing to do with Oxford. Or Lamb may have recovered from his first resentment.

alterable, displaceable at pleasure! as if they might have been otherwise, and just as good! as if inspiration was made up of parts, and these fluctuating, successive, indifferent! I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again!") The comment that the literary reader is likely to make on this criticism is to wish that we had the original manuscript of it also, so that we might see whether Lamb's epithets came to him in their final form at the first inspiration, or whether he, like Milton, "struck the second heat upon the muses' anvil." (Some men of genius, like Shakespeare, have corrected but little, others, like Milton and Shelley, have corrected much; but the knowledge of the *genesis* of a poem should not shake a critic's faith in the absoluteness of the result when it is achieved.)

The passage from line 142 to line 150 was an afterthought, and stands originally thus, on a separate sheet :

Bring the rathe primrose that unwedded dies
 Colouring the pale cheek of uninjoy'd love
 And that sad floure that strove
 To write his owne woes on the vermeil graine
 Next adde Narcissus y^t still weeps in vaine
 The woodbines and y^e pancie freakt wth jet
 The glowing violet
 The cowslip wan that hangs his pensive head
 And every bud that sorrow's liverie weares
 Let Daffadillies fill their cups with teares
 Bid Amaranthus all his beautie shed
 To strew the laureat herse, etc.

This is crossed through. Then the poet tries again :

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies
 The tufted crowtoe and pale jessamine
 The white pinke and ye pansie freakt wth jet
 The glowing violet
 The musk-rose and the garish columbine*
 Wth cowslips wan that hang the pensive head
 And every flower that sad escutcheon bears†
 †Let daffadillies fill thire cups wth teares
 †Bid Amaranthus all his beauties shed
 To strew, etc.

*Well-a-woodb
 †Imbro
 weares

There might be a worse exercise for budding critics than to conjecture the poet's motive for each alteration. It is an exercise, too, that cannot bring shame, because it cannot be authoritatively corrected. We may guess that the references to Hyacinthus and Narcissus were banished because the circumstances of their fate had too little in common with Mr King's; according to the poets, they were boys celebrated for their beauty, one of whom was killed by Apollo in a game of quoits, and the other fell in love with his own reflection in a stream. Now Mr King was a young don of five-and-twenty. Again, Shakespeare had spoken in "The Winter's Tale" of

Pale primroses
 That die unmarried, ere they can behold
 Bright Phœbus in his strength ;

where their poetical sex is distinctly marked as feminine. Milton's original lines would have challenged comparison with Shakespeare's, and would have made too much of a reference that in this case had no particular appropriateness. And again, one can understand the picturesque advantage of representing the flowers as bearing funereal escutcheons, instead of wearing livery, and at the same time feel that the image was

a little too energetic for its context. But enough of these toys.

A word may be added in conclusion upon Milton's sonnets. They form a part of his work which it is perhaps most possible to over-estimate. The English practice in sonnet writing, begun by Surrey and carried to such glorious success by Shakespeare, was to employ a system of three quatrains followed by a couplet, making seven rhymes in the fourteen lines. It was not ignorance of Italian models that led the Elizabethans to prefer a type of their own, but recognition of the fact that the peculiar difficulties of rhyming in English made the Italian form too much of a puzzle for serious poetry.¹ Milton, in surrendering the English tradition, does not attempt the difficulties of the Italian. His rhymes are generally poor; he ignores the necessary break between octave and sestet; and in one case he retains the final couplet, which is entirely foreign to the genius of the Petrarchan sonnet. As a result, his sonnets are a hybrid between the sonnet proper, the English form, and an Horatian ode. In their substance they have received a splendid eulogy from Wordsworth, who was in his own sonnet-writing Milton's disciple. Speaking of the history of the sonnet, he says :

When a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

¹On this matter the reader should consult the introduction to "A Little Book of Sonnets" by Mr Bowyer Nichols.

Milton's sonnets are but some three-and-twenty, which is few indeed beside Wordsworth's vast output ; but those of them which can be called "soul-animating" are not more than a tithe of this number. Beside the two sonnets on his blindness and that "on his being arrived to the age of twenty-three," I do not know which can answer to this description. The sonnets to Fairfax, Cromwell, and Vane are partly panegyrics, partly political essays, and they do not animate the soul ; nor do the sonnets to virtuous and religious ladies ; nor, charming as they are, do the delicately Horatian lines to Mr Lawrence. The disciple in this matter was greater than his master.

As this edition is designed for the pleasure of the general reader, no attempt has been made at learned annotation ; but a few unusual expressions have been explained and a few notes added on points of particular interest.

MILTON'S MINOR POEMS

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Composed 1629

I

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring ;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith He wont at Heaven's high council-
table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside ; and here with us to be
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal
clay.

III

Say Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God ?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome Him to this His new abode,

Now while the Heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in
squadrons bright?

IV

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet!
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed
fire.

THE HYMN

I

It was the winter wild,
While the Heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,

Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III

But He her fears to cease
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace ;
She crowned with olive green came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,
And waving wide her myrtle wand
She strikes a universal peace through sea and
land.

IV

No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around,
The idle spear and shield were high uphung ;
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

V

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began :
The winds with wonder whist
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd
wave.

VI

The stars with deep amaze
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
 Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
 Or Lucifer that often warned them thence ;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord Himself bespake, and bid them
 go.

VII

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
 The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
 The new-enlightened world no more should
 need ;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axle-tree could
 bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
 Sat simply chatting in a rustic row ;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
 Was kindly come to live with them below ;
Perhaps their loves or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly¹ thoughts so busy keep.

¹simple.

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took :
The air such pleasure loth to lose
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly
close.

X

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night
arrayed,
The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire
With unexpressive notes to Heaven's new-born
Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
 But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
 And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltring waves their oozy channel
 keep.

XIII

Ring out ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
 (If ye have power to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
 And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow ;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.

XIV

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
 Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon, and die,
 And lep'rous sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell itself will pass away
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering
 day.

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men.

Orbed in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,¹
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down-
steering,
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so,
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both Himself and us to glorify :
Yet first to those ychained in sleep
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through
the deep,

XVII

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smould'ring clouds out-
brake :
The aged Earth aghast
With terror of that blast
Shall from the surface to the centre shake ;
When at the world's last session
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread
His throne.

¹The first edition read :

“Th' enamel'd arras of the rainbow wearing
And Mercy set between.”

XVIII

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins ; for from this happy day
Th' old Dragon under-ground
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway,
And, wroth to see His kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof in words de-
ceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathèd spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament ;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent ;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,

The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight
 plaint ;
 In urns and altars round,
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint ;¹
 And the chill marble seems to sweat,
 While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baalim
 Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice-battered god of Palestine ;
 And mooned Ashtaroth,
 Heaven's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine ;
 The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn,
 In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz
 mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch fled,
 Hath left in shadows dread
 His burning idol all of blackest hue,
 In vain with cymbals' ring
 They call the grisly king,
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue ;
 The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
 Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
 In Memphian grove or green

¹ceremonious.

Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings
loud :

Nor can he be at rest

Within his sacred chest,

Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud ;
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark

The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipped
ark.

XXV

He feels from Juda's land

The dreaded Infant's hand,

The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn ;
Nor all the gods beside

Longer dare abide,

Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine :

Our Babe, to show His Godhead true,

Can in His swaddling bands control the damned
crew.

XXVI

So when the sun in bed,

Curtained with cloudy red,

Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,

The flocking shadows pale

Troop to th' infernal jail,

Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted fays

Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-
loved maze.

XXVII

But see the Virgin blest,

Hath laid her Babe to rest.

Time is our tedious song should here have
 ending ;
 Heaven's youngest teemèd star
 Hath fixed her polished car,
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attend-
 ing :
 And all about the courtly stable
 Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

A PARAPHRASE ON PSALM CXIV

*This and the following Psalm were done by
 the Author at fifteen years old*

When the blest seed of Terah's faithful son
 After long toil their liberty had won,
 And passed from Pharian fields to Canaan land,
 Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand,
 Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown
 His praise and glory was in Israel known.
 That saw the troubled sea, and shivering fled,
 And sought to hide his froth-becurled head
 Low in the earth ; Jordan's clear streams recoil,
 As a faint host that hath received the foil.
 The high, huge-bellied mountains skip like rams
 Amongst their ewes, the little hills like lambs.
 Why fled the ocean ? And why skipped the
 mountains ?
 Why turned Jordan toward his crystal fountains ?
 Shake earth, and at the presence be aghast
 Of Him that ever was, and aye shall last,
 That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush
 And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush.

PSALM CXXXVI

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for He is kind,
For His mercies aye endure
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze His name abroad,
For of gods He is the God ;
For, etc.

O let us His praises tell,
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell ;
For, etc.

Who with His miracles doth make
Amazèd Heaven and Earth to shake ;
For, etc.

Who by His wisdom did create
The painted Heavens so full of state ;
For, etc.

That did the solid Earth ordain
To rise above the watery plain ;
For, etc.

That by His all-commanding might
Did fill the new-made world with light
For, etc.

And caused the golden-tressèd sun
All the day long his course to run ;
For, etc.

The hornèd moon to shine by night
Amongst her spangled sisters bright.
For, etc.

He with His thunder-clasping hand
Smote the first-born of Egypt land ;
For, etc.

And, in despite of Pharaoh fell,
He brought from thence His Israel.
For, etc.

The ruddy waves He cleft in twain
Of the Erythræan main,
For, etc.

The floods stood still like walls of glass
While the Hebrew bands did pass ;
For, etc.

But full soon they did devour
The tawny king with all his power
For, etc.

His chosen people He did bless
In the wasteful wilderness.
For, etc.

In bloody battle He brought down
Kings of prowess and renown.
For, etc.

He foiled bold Seon and his host,
That ruled the Amorrean coast ;
For, etc.

And large-limbed Og He did subdue,
With all his over-hardy crew ;
For, etc.

And to His servant Israel,
He gave their land therein to dwell.
For, etc.

He hath with a piteous eye
Beheld us in our misery ;
For, etc.

And freed us from the slavery
Of the invading enemy
For, etc.

All living creatures He doth feed,
And with full hand supplies their need.
For, etc.

Let us therefore warble forth
His mighty majesty and worth ;
For, etc.

That His mansion hath on high
Above the reach of mortal eye.
For His mercies aye endure
Ever faithful, ever sure.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR
INFANT DYING OF A COUGH*Anno aetatis 17. 1673*

I

O fairest flower, no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour, if thou hadst outlasted
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry ;
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But killed, alas ! and then bewailed his fatal bliss.

II

For since grim Aquilo, his charioteer,
By boisterous rape the Athenian damsel got,
He thought it touched his deity full near,
If likewise he some fair one wedded not ;
Thereby to wipe away the infamous blot
Of long uncoupled bed and childless eld,
Which 'mongst the wanton gods a foul reproach
was held.

III

So, mounting up in icy-pearled car,
Through middle empire of the freezing air
He wandered long, till thee he spied from far,
There ended was his quest, there ceased his care
Down he descended from his snow-soft chair,
But, all unwares, with his cold-kind embrace,
Unhoused thy virgin soul from her fair bidding-
place.

IV

Yet art thou not inglorious in thy fate ;
For so Apollo, with unweeting hand,
Whilom did slay his dearly-lovèd mate,
Young Hyacinth, born on Eurotas' strand,
Young Hyacinth, the pride of Spartan land ;
But then transformed him to a purple flower :
Alack, that so to change thee Winter had no power!

V

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb,
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed
Hid from the world in a low-delvèd tomb ;
Could Heaven, for pity, thee so strictly doom ?
O no ! for something in thy face did shine
Above mortality, that showed thou wast divine.

VI

Resolve me, then, O Soul most surely blest
(If so it be that thou these plaints dost hear) !
Tell me, bright Spirit, where'er thou hoverest,
Whether above that high first-moving sphere,
Or in the Elysian fields (if such there were),
O say me true if thou wert mortal wight,
And why from us so quickly thou didst take thy
flight.

VII

Wert thou some star, which from the ruined roof
Of shaken Olympus by mischance didst fall ;
Which careful Jove in nature's true behoof
Took up, and in fit place did reinstall ?
Or did of late Earth's sons besiege the wall
Of sheeny Heaven, and thou some goddess fled
Amongst us here below to hide thy nectared head ?

VIII

Or wert thou that just Maid who once before
Forsook the hated earth, oh ! tell me sooth,
And camest again to visit us once more ?
Or wert thou [Mercy] that sweet smiling Youth ?
Or that crowned Matron, sage white-robed Truth ?
Or any other of that heavenly brood
Let down in cloudy throne to do the world some
good ?

IX

Or wert thou of the golden-winged host,
Who, having clad thyself in human weed,
To earth from thy prefixed seat didst post,
And after short abode fly back with speed,
As if to show what creatures Heaven doth breed ;
Thereby to set the hearts of men on fire
To scorn the sordid world, and unto Heaven
aspire ?

X

But oh ! why didst thou not stay here below
To bless us with thy Heaven-loved innocence,
To slake his wrath whom sin hath made our foe,
To turn swift-rushing black perdition hence,
Or drive away the slaughtering pestilence,
To stand 'twixt us and our deserved smart ?
But thou canst best perform that office where
thou art.

XI

Then thou, the mother of so sweet a child,
Her false imagined loss cease to lament,
And wisely learn to curb thy sorrows wild ;

Think what a present thou to God hast sent,
And render him with patience what he lent :
This if thou do, he will an offspring give
That till the world's last end shall make thy name
to live.

THE PASSION

I

Ere-while of music and ethereal mirth,
Wherewith the stage of air and earth did ring,
And joyous news of Heavenly Infant's birth,
My muse with angels did divide to sing ;
But headlong joy is ever on the wing,
In wintry solstice like the shortened light,
Soon swallowed up in dark and long out-living
night.

II

For now to sorrow must I tune my song,
And set my harp to notes of saddest woe,
Which on our dearest Lord did seize ere long,
Dangers, and snares, and wrongs, and worse than
so,
Which He for us did freely undergo ;
Most perfect hero, tried in heaviest plight
Of labours huge and hard, too hard for human
wight.

III

He sovran Priest, stooping His regal head,
That dropped with odorous oil down His fair eyes,
Poor fleshly tabernacle entered,

His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies ;
O what a mask was there, what a disguise !

Yet more ; the stroke of death He must abide.
Then lies Him meekly down fast by His brethren's
side.

IV

These latest¹ scenes confine my roving verse,
To this horizon is my Phœbus bound,
His godlike acts, and His temptations fierce,
And former sufferings elsewhere are found ;
Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump doth sound ;
Me softer airs befit, and softer strings
Of lute or viol still, more apt for mournful things.

V

Befriend me Night, best patroness of grief,
Over the pole thy thickest mantle throw,
And work my flattered fancy to belief
That Heaven and Earth are coloured with my woe ;
My sorrows are too dark for day to know :
The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
And letters, where my tears have washed, a
wannish white.

VI

See, see the chariot and those rushing wheels
That whirled the prophet up at Chebar flood :
My spirit some transporting cherub feels,
To bear me where the towers of Salem stood,
Once glorious towers, now sunk in guiltless blood ;
There doth my soul in holy vision sit,
In pensive trance, and anguish, and ecstatic fit.

¹The first edition read " latter."

VII

Mine eye hath found that sad sepulchral rock
That was the casket of Heaven's richest store,
And here though grief my feeble hands uplock.
Yet on the softened quarry would I score
My plaining verse as lively as before ;

For sure so well instructed are my tears,
That they would fitly fall in ordered characters.

VIII

Or should I thence hurried on viewless wing,
Take up a weeping on the mountains wild,
The gentle neighbourhood of grove and spring
Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild,
And I (for grief is easily beguiled)

Might think th' infection of my sorrows loud
Had got a race of mourners on some pregnant
cloud.

This subject, the author finding to be above the years
he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied
with what was begun, left it unfinished.

ON TIME

Fly envious Time, till thou run out thy race,
Call on the lazy, leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but by the heavy plummet's pace,
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross ;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain.

For when as each thing bad thou hast entombed,
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss,
And joy shall overtake us as a flood ;
When everything that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With Truth, and Peace, and Love shall ever
shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, t'whose happy-making sight alone,
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,
Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars we shall for ever sit
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and
thee O Time.

UPON THE CIRCUMCISION

Ye flaming powers and winged Warriors bright,
That erst with music and triumphant song,
First heard by happy watchful shepherds' ear,
So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along
Through the soft silence of the listening night ;
Now mourn ; and if sad share with us to bear
Your fiery essence can distil no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow.
He who with all Heaven's heraldry whilere
Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease ;
Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His infancy to seize !

O more exceeding love, or law more just ?
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love !
For we by rightful doom remediless
Were lost in death, till He that dwelt above
High-throned in secret bliss, for us, frail dust,
Emptied His glory, even to nakedness,
And that great cov'nant which we still transgress
Entirely satisfied,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful Justice bore for our excess,
And seals obedience first with wounding smart
This day ; but O ere long
Huge pangs and strong
 Will pierce more near His heart !

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere - born harmonious sisters, Voice and
 Verse,
Wed your divine sounds ; and mixed power
 employ
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbèd song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee ;
Where the bright seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires.

With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly ;
That we on earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise ;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh
 din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord ; whose love their motion
 swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere
 long
To His celestial consort us unite,
To live with Him and sing in endless morn of
 light.

AN EPITAPH ON THE
MARCHIONESS OF WINCHESTER

This rich marble doth inter
The honoured wife of Winchester,
A viscount's daughter, an earl's heir,
Besides what her virtues fair
Added to her noble birth,
More than she could own from earth.
Summers three times eight save one
She had told ; alas too soon,
After so short time of breath,
To house with darkness and with death.
Yet had the number of her days

Been as complete as was her praise,
Nature and fate had had no strife
In giving limit to her life.
Her high birth and her graces sweet
Quickly found a lover meet ;
The virgin quire for her request
The god that sits at marriage-feast ;
He at their invoking came
But with a scarce well-lighted flame,
And in his garland, as he stood,
Ye might discern a cypress bud.
Once had the early matrons run
To greet her of a lovely son,
And now with second hope she goes,
And calls Lucina to her throes ;
But whether by mischance or blame
Atropos for Lucina came ;
And with remorseless cruelty
Spoiled at once both fruit and tree :
The hapless babe before his birth
Had burial, yet not laid in earth,
And the languished mother's womb
Was not long a living tomb.
So have I seen some tender slip
Saved with care from winter's nip,
The pride of her carnation train,
Plucked up by some unheedy swain
Who only thought to crop the flower
New shot up from vernal shower ;
But the fair blossom hangs the head
Sideways, as on a dying bed,
And those pearls of dew she wears
Prove to be presaging tears
Which the sad morn had let fall
On her hastening funeral.

Gentle lady, may thy grave
Peace and quiet ever have ;
After this thy travail sore
Sweet rest seize thee evermore,
That to give the world increase
Shortened hast thy own life's lease ;
Here, besides the sorrowing
That thy noble house doth bring,
Here be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon,
And some flowers and some bays,
For¹ thy hearse to strew the ways,
Sent thee from the banks of Came,
Devoted to thy virtuous name ;
Whilst thou, bright saint, high sitt'st in glory,
Next her much like to thee in story,
That fair Syrian shepherdess,
Who after years of barrenness
The highly-favoured Joseph bore
To him that served for her before,
And at her next birth, much like thee,
Through pangs fled to felicity,
Far within the bosom bright
Of blazing Majesty and Light,
There with thee, new welcome saint,
Like fortunes may her soul acquaint,
With thee there clad in radiant sheen,
No marchioness, but now a queen.

¹Probably " For " should be " 'Fore."

SONG ON MAY MORNING

Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.

Hail bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth and warm desire,
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early song,
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

ON SHAKESPEAR.¹ 1630

What needs my Shakespear for his honoured
bones
The labour of an age in pilèd stones,
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a life-long monument,
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;

¹As these verses stand in the second folio of Shakespeare's works (1632), there are a few slight differences from the text of 1645, which is given above.

Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

WHO SICKENED IN THE TIME OF HIS VACANCY,
BEING FORBID TO GO TO LONDON BY REASON
OF THE PLAGUE

Here lies old Hobson,¹ Death hath broke his girt,
And here alas hath laid him in the dirt ;
Or else, the ways being foul, twenty to one
He's here stuck in a slough and overthrown.
'Twas such a shifter, that if truth were known,
Death was half glad when he had got him down ;
For he had any time this ten years full
Dodged with him betwixt Cambridge and The
Bull.

And surely Death could never have prevailed
Had not his weekly course of carriage failed ;
But lately, finding him so long at home,
And thinking now his journey's end was come,
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,
In the kind office of a chamberlin

¹Thomas Hobson (1544-1631) made a great fortune at Cambridge, and to his bounty is due the maintenance of the conduit in the town, and also the rivulet of water that runs through the main streets. The proverb "Hobson's choice" is said to refer to his custom of letting out his horses in the order in which they stood in the stable.

Showed him his room where he must lodge that
night,
Pulled off his boots, and took away the light.
If any ask for him, it shall be said,
"Hobson has supped, and 's newly gone to bed."

ANOTHER ON THE SAME

Here lieth one who did most truly prove
That he could never die whilst he could move ;
So hung his destiny, never to rot
While he might still jog on and keep his trot ;
Made of sphere-metal, never to decay
Until his revolution was at stay.
Time numbers motion, yet (without a crime
'Gainst old truth) motion numbered out his time ;
And, like an engine moved with wheel and weight,
His principles being ceased, he ended straight.
Rest, that gives all men life, gave him his death,
And too much breathing put him out of breath ;
Nor were it contradiction to affirm
Too long vacation hastened on his term.
Merely to drive the time away he sickened,
Fainted, and died, nor would with ale be quickened.
"Nay," quoth he, on his swooning bed out-
stretched,
"If I mayn't carry, sure I'll ne'er be fetched,
But vow, though the cross doctors all stood hearers,
For one carrier put down to make six bearers."
Ease was his chief disease ; and, to judge right,
He died for heaviness that his cart went light.
His leisure told him that his time was come,
And lack of load made his life burdensome,

That even to his last breath (there be that say't),
As he were pressed to death, he cried, " More
weight ! "

But, had his doings lasted as they were,
He had been an immortal carrier.
Obedient to the moon he spent his date
In course reciprocal, and had his fate
Linked to the mutual flowing of the seas ;
Yet (strange to think) his wain was his increase.
His letters are delivered all and gone ;
Only remains this superscription.

L'ALLEGRO

Hence, loathèd Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
unholy !
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
wings,
And the night-raven sings ;
There, under ebon shades and low-browed
rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth ;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore :
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,

Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There, on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips, and Cranks and wanton Wiles,
Nods and Becks and wreathèd Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek ;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe ;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty ;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprouèd pleasures free ;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,¹
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine ;

¹To save Milton's reputation for ornithological accuracy, it has been proposed to take this line not of the lark, but of the poet. But if it is the poet who goes to the window of his bed-chamber, to whom does he bid good-morrow? And what is

While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin ;
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before :
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill :
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale¹
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures :
Russet² lawns, and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest ;

then the sense of "in spite of sorrow"? Would his natural melancholy have led him to stop in bed all day?

¹This is usually explained of counting sheep, and perhaps that gives the best picture, if the hawthorn is taken distributively. If there is but one hawthorn, the shepherds must be imagined as "chatting in a rustic row" (see "Ode on the Nativity," line 87.)

²grey ; *of.* "russet-pated choughs."

Meadows trim with daisies pied ;
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide ;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves ;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail :
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faëry Mab the junkets eat.
She was pinched and pulled, she said ;
And he by Friars' lantern led ;
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn

That ten day-labourers could not end ;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,¹
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry ;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout,
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,

¹At another time.

Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony ;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.

These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO

Hence, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred !
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys !
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But, hail ! thou Goddess sage and holy !
Hail, divinest Melancholy !
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue ;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's¹ sister might beseem,

¹Memnon was famous for his beauty (Odyssey, p. 522).

Or that starred Ethiop queen¹ that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended :
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore ;
His daughter she ; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes :
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing ;
And add to these retirèd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure ;
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,

¹Cassiopea.

Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,
The Cherub Contemplation ;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed¹ oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy !
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy evensong ;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar ;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removèd place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.

¹Nightingales choose a place for singing and keep to it.

Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes,¹ or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshy nook ;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,²
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.

But, O sad Virgin ! that thy power
Might raise Musaeus from his bower ;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek ;
Or call up him that left half-told³
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,

¹Books attributed to a mythical Egyptian called Hermes Trismegistus, dealing with magic and alchemy, were studied in the Middle Ages.

²Thebes is presented in the "Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus, and the "Œdipus Rex" and "Antigone" of Sophocles. Agamemnon and his children Orestes, Iphigenia, and Electra were descended from Pelops.

³See Chaucer's "Squire's Tale."

That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride ;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frownced, as she was wont
With the Attic-boy¹ to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep

¹Cephalus.

And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream¹
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid ;
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There, let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give ;
And I with thee will choose to live.

¹It is difficult to understand how Milton imaged to himself this dream, and how "the stream of portraiture" was related to the wings of Sleep.

SONNETS

O nightingale that on yon bloomy spray
Warbl'st at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love. O, if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh ;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why.
Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth
year !
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arrived so near ;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.

Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of
Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED
TO THE CITY

Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may
seize,
If deed of honour did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from
harms.
He can requite thee ; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower :
The great Emathian conqueror did spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground ;¹ and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.²

¹Alexander the Great, called Emathian from a province of Macedonia, is reported to have spared Pindar's house in his sack of Thebes (B.C. 335).

²The recital of a chorus from Euripides is said to have induced the Spartan Lysander to spare Athens (B.C. 404).

Lady, that in the prime of earliest youth
Wisely hath shunned the broad way and the
green,
And with those few art eminently seen
That labour up the hill of heavenly Truth ;
The better part with Mary and with Ruth
Chosen thou hast ; and they that over-ween,
And at thy growing virtues fret their spleen,
No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth.
Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,
And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be
sure
Thou, when the Bridegroom with his feastful
friends
Passes to bliss at the mid-hour of night,
Hast gained thy entrance, Virgin wise and pure.

TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY

Daughter to that good Earl,¹ once President
Of England's Council and her Treasury,
Who lived in both unstained with gold or fee.
And left them both, more in himself content,
Till the sad breaking of that Parliament
Broke him, as that dishonest victory
At Chæroneæ, fatal to liberty,
Killed with report that old man eloquent.²

¹First Earl of Marlborough (1550-1629).

²Isocrates.

Though later born than to have known the days
Wherein your father flourished, yet by you,
Madam, methinks I see him living yet :
So well your words his noble virtues praise,
That all both judge you to relate them true
And to possess them, honoured Margaret.

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH
FOLLOWED UPON MY WRITING
CERTAIN TREATISES

A book was writ of late called *Tetrachordon*¹
And woven close, both matter, form, and style ;
The subject new : it walked the town awhile,
Numbering good intellects ; now seldom pored
on.

Cries the stall-reader, " Bless us ! what a word
on

A title-page is this ! " ; and some in file
Stand spelling false, while one might walk to
Mile-

End Green. Why is it harder, sirs, than *Gordon*,
Colkitto, or *Macdonnel*, or *Galasp* ?

Those rugged names to our like mouths grow
sleek

That would have made Quintilian stare and
gasp.

¹" *Tetrachordon* ; expositions upon the foure chief
places in Scripture which treat of Marriage or nullities
in Marriage."

Thy age, like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek,¹
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,
When thou taught'st Cambridge and King
Edward Greek.

ON THE SAME

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs ;
As when those hinds that were transformed to
frogs
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee.
But this is got by casting pearls to hogs,
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when Truth would set them
free.
Licence they mean when they cry Liberty ;
For who loves that must first be wise and good :
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth, and loss of blood.

¹Sir John Cheke (1514-1557) was the first Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and afterwards tutor to King Edward VI.

TO MR H. LAWES¹ ON THE
PUBLISHING OF HIS AIRS

9TH FEBRUARY 1645

Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
First taught our English music how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas' ears, committing short and long :
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
With praise enough for Envy to look wan ;
To after age thou shalt be writ the man
That with smooth air couldst humour best our
tongue.

Thou honour'st Verse, and Verse must lend her
wing

To honour thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire,
That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.²

¹Henry Lawes (1596-1662), the composer of the music to "Comus." "He was the first English musician who studied the proper accentuation of words." (D. N. B.)

²See "Purgatorio," Canto II.

ON THE RELIGIOUS MEMORY OF
MRS CATHERINE THOMSON, MY
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

DECEASED, 16TH DECEMBER 1646

When Faith and Love, which parted from thee
never,
Had ripened thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load
Of Death, called Life, which us from Life
doth sever.
Thy works, and alms, and all thy good endeavour,
Stayed not behind, nor in the grave were trod ;
But, as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Followed thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on ; and Faith, who knew them
best
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple
beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge ; who thenceforth bid thee
rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN
PIEDMONT¹

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose
bones

Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and
stones.

Forget not : in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their
moans

The vales redoubled to the hill, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes
sow

O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul
more bent

¹The persecution of 1655, stopped by the emphatic remonstrance of Cromwell.

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide ;
" Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ? "
I fondly ask : but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, " God doth not
 need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who
 best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best : his
 state
Is kingly : thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Lawrence,¹ of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are
 mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the
 fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining ? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius reinspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor
 spun.

¹" Young Lawrence, the son of him that was President of Oliver's Council." Phillips' " Life of Milton."

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may
rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and
spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

Cyriack,¹ whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause,
Pronounced and in our volumes taught our
laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench;
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting draws;
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intend, and what the
French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest
way;
For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And, when God sends a cheerful hour, re-
frains.

¹Cyriack Skinner, son of a Lincolnshire squire,
and grandson of Sir Edward Coke, the famous judge.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint¹
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband
gave,
Rescued from Death by force, though pale
and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of childbed
taint
Purification in the Old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.
Her face was veiled ; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person
shined
So clear as in no face with more delight.
But, O ! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my
night.

ON THE NEW FORCERS OF CONSCIENCE UNDER THE LONG PARLIAMENT

Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,
And with stiff vows renounced his Liturgy,
To seize the widowed whore Plurality
From them whose sin ye envied, not abhorred,

¹Milton's second wife, Catherine Woodcock, died in childbirth fifteen months after her marriage.

Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
 To force our consciences that Christ set free,
 And ride us with a Classic Hierarchy,
 Taught ye by mere A. S.¹ and Rutherford?²
 Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,
 Would have been held in high esteem with
 Paul,
 Must now be named and printed heretics
 By shallow Edwards³ and Scotch What-d'ye-
 call!⁴
 But we do hope to find out all your tricks,
 Your plots and packing, worse than those of
 Trent,

That so the Parliament
 May with their wholesome and preventive shears
 Clip your phylacteries, though baulk your ears,⁵
 And succour our just fears,
 When they shall read this clearly in your charge :
 New *Presbyter* is but old *Priest* writ large.

¹Adam Stewart, a Presbyterian pamphleteer.

²Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity at St Andrews, a prominent divine in the Westminster Assembly.

³Thomas Edwards, author of popular treatises against Independency.

⁴According to Masson's conjecture, Robert Baillie, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow, who, like Edwards, had attacked Milton for his divorce tracts.

⁵"Though sparing your ears," as the Star Chamber would not have done. From the Cambridge MS. we see that the line originally stood :

"Crop ye as close as marginal P——'s ears" ;
 a compendious insult to Prynne's appearance and his Presbyterian pamphlets, the margins of which were loaded with references. As Prynne lost his ears in the Puritan cause, we may be glad that Milton thought better of this sally.

The four following sonnets were published in a mangled form by Phillips in his "Life of Milton"; they are here printed from the Cambridge MS., where that to Fairfax is in Milton's autograph. The sonnet to Vane has been printed in an anonymous Life (1662).¹

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX,¹
AT THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe
rings,
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings,
Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings
Victory home, though new rebellions raise
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.
O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand
(For what can war but endless war still breed?)
Till truth and right from violence be freed,
And public faith cleared from the shameful brand
Of public fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed,
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

¹Thomas Fairfax (1612-1671) was commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces during the Civil War. After the execution of the King he retired from politics. The siege of Colchester lasted seventy-five days (June 13th to August 27th, 1648), and was the final blow to the Royalist cause.

TO THE LORD GENERAL
CROMWELL, MAY 1652

*On the proposals of certain ministers at the
Committee for Propagation of the Gospel¹*

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a
cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast
ploughed,
And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work
pursued ;
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots
imbrued,
And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureate wreath : yet much
remains
To conquer still ; Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War : new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

¹These proposals were for preserving the Established Church, with certain reforms, such as the inclusion of all Protestant sects. Milton sympathised with the party which opposed an establishment of any kind.

TO SIR HENRY VANE THE
YOUNGER¹

Vane, young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held
The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms,
repelled
The fierce Epirot² and the African³ bold,
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow states, hard to be spelled ;
Then to advise how war may, best upheld
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,
In all her equipage ; besides, to know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each, thou hast learned, which few
have done.
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe :
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

¹Sir Henry Vane (1613-1662), the Parliamentary leader, and friend of Cromwell. The point of the sonnet is the same as that of the previous sonnet to Cromwell ; but on the question of a State Church, Vane agreed with Milton, while Cromwell did not.

²Pyrrhus.

³Hannibal.

TO MR CYRIACK SKINNER UPON
HIS BLINDNESS

Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes, though
clear

To outward view of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot ;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them
overplied

In Liberty's defence, my noble task,¹
Of which all Europe talks from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the
world's vain mask
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

¹Milton's blindness was complete by June 1652. It had been hastened by his labours of the previous year in preparing his "Defence of the People of England against Salmasius."

THE FIFTH ODE OF HORACE

LIB. I

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa

*Rendered almost word for word, without rhyme,
according to the Latin measure, as near as
the language will permit*

What slender youth, bedewed with liquid odours,
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,

Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou

In wreaths thy golden hair,

Plain in thy neatness?¹ Oh, how oft shall he
On faith and changèd gods complain, and seas

Rough with black winds and storms

Unwonted shall admire!

Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold;

Who always vacant, always amiable,

Hopes thee, of flattering gales

Unmindful. Hapless they

To whom thou untried seem'st fair! Me, in my
vowed

Picture, the sacred wall declares to have hung

My dank and dropping weeds

To the stern God of Sea.

¹Milton read "simplex munditie."

Anno ætatis 19

AT A VACATION EXERCISE IN THE
COLLEGE, PART LATIN, PART
ENGLISH

*The Latin Speeches ended, the English thus
began :*

Hail, Native Language, that by sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to
speak,
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,
Driving dumb Silence from the portal door,
Where he had mutely sat two years before :
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask
That now I use thee in my latter task :
Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee,
I know my tongue but little grace can do thee.
Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first,
Believe me, I have thither packed the worst :
And, if it happen as I did forecast,
The daintiest dishes shall be served up last.
I pray thee then deny me not thy aid
For this same small neglect that I have made ;
But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest
treasure ;
Not those new-fangled toys, and trimming slight
Which takes our late fantastics with delight ;
But cull those richest robes and gayest attire,
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire.
I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out,

G

And, weary of their place, do only stay
Till thou hast decked them in thy best array ;
That so they may, without suspect or fears,
Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears.
Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound :
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire ;
Then, passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow and lofts of piled thunder,
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune
 raves,
In Heaven's defiance mustering all his waves ;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldam Nature in her cradle was ;
And last of kings and queens and heroes old,
Such as the wise Demodocus once told
In solemn songs at king Alcinous' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest
Are held, with his melodious harmony,
In willing chains and sweet captivity.
But fie, my wandering Muse, how thou dost stray
Expectance calls thee now another way.
Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent
To keep in compass of thy predicament.
Then quick about thy purposed business come,
That to the next I may resign my room.

*Then ENS is represented as Father of the Pre-
dicaments, his ten Sons ; whereof the eldest
stood for SUBSTANCE with his Canons ; which
ENS, thus speaking, explains :*

Good luck befriend thee, Son ; for at thy birth
The faëry ladies danced upon the hearth.
Thy drowsy nurse hath sworn she did them spy
Come tripping to the room where thou didst lie,
And, sweetly singing round about thy bed,
Strew all their blessings on thy sleeping head.
She heard them give thee this, that thou shouldst
still

From eyes of mortals walk invisible.
Yet there is something that doth force my fear ;
For once it was my dismal hap to hear
A Sibyl old, bow-bent with crooked age,
That far events full wisely could presage,
And, in Time's long and dark prospective-glass,
Foresaw what future days should bring to pass.
"Your son," said she " (nor can you it prevent),
Shall subject be to many an Accident.
O'er all his brethren he shall reign as king ;
Yet every one shall make him underling,
And those that cannot live from him asunder
Ungratefully shall strive to keep him under.
In worth and excellence he shall outgo them,
Yet, being above them, he shall be below them ;
From others he shall stand in need of nothing,
Yet on his brothers shall depend for clothing ;
To find a foe it shall not be his hap,
And peace shall lull him in her flowery lap ;
Yet shall he live in strife, and at his door
Devouring war shall never cease to roar ;

Yea, it shall be his natural property
 To harbour those that are at enmity."
 What power, what force, what mighty spell, if not
 Your learned hands, can loose this Gordian knot?

*The next, QUANTITY and QUALITY, spake in prose :
 then RELATION was called by his name*

Rivers, arise : whether thou be the son
 Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulfy Dun,
 Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant,
 spreads

His thirty arms along the indented meads,
 Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath,
 Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death,
 Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lea,
 Or coaly Tyne, or ancient hallowed Dee,
 Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name,
 Or Medway smooth, or royal-towered Thame.

The rest was prose

ARCADES

*Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess
 Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some
 Noble Persons of her Family ; who appear
 on the Scene in pastoral habit, moving toward
 the seat of state, with this song :*

I. SONG

Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, look !
 What sudden blaze of majesty
 Is that which we from hence descry,
 Too divine to be mistook ?
 This, this is she

To whom our vows and wishes bend :
Here our solemn search hath end.

Fame, that her high worth to raise
Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise :
 Less than half we find expressed ;
 Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark what radiant state she spreads,
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads.
This, this is she alone,
 Sitting like a goddess bright
 In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the towered Cybele,
Mother of a hundred gods
Juno dares not give her odds :
 Who had thought this clime had held
 A deity so unparalleled ?

*As they come forward THE GENIUS OF THE WOOD
appears, and, turning toward them, speaks :*

Gen. Stay, gentle Swains, for, though in this
disguise,
I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes ;
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice,
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse ;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskin'd Nymphs, as great and good.

I know this quest of yours and free intent
Was all in honour and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,
And with all helpful service will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity,
And lead ye where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold ;
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon.
For know, by lot from Jove, I am the Power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint and wanton windings wove ;
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds and blasting vapours chill ;
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,
Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites.
When evening grey doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount, and all this hallowed ground ;
And early ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
With puissant words and murmurs made to
 bless.

But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.

Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould with gross unpurgèd ear.
And yet such music worthiest were to blaze
The peerless height of her immortal praise
Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferior hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds. Yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show
I will assay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state ;
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

II. SONG

O'er the smooth enamelled green,
Where no print of step hath been,
Follow me, as I sing
And touch the warbled string :
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof
Follow me.
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. SONG

Nymphs and Shepherds, dance no more
By sandy Ladon's liliated banks¹ ;
On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,
Trip no more in twilight ranks ;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
A better soil shall give ye thanks.
From the stony Mænalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us ;
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the Lady of this place.
Though Syrinx² your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

¹Ladon is a river in Arcadia ; Lycæus, Erymanthus, and Mænalus, are mountains in Arcadia ; Cyllene is on the Arcadian border. Mr Frazer, in his edition of Pausanias, tells us that "by Ladon's banks" there are no lilies.

²Syrinx, being pursued by Pan, fled into the Ladon, and was changed into a reed.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637 ; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due ;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring ;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse :
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn,
And as he passes turn,

And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud !
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill ;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his wester-
ing wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Tempered to the oaten flute ;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long ;
And old Damætas loved to hear our song.

But, oh ! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return !
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows ;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless
deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,

Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream,
Ay me ! I fondly dream ;
Had ye been there, . . . for what could that have
done ?

What could the Muse¹ herself that Orpheus
bore,

The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,
When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days :
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. " But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling
ears :

" Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

¹Calliope.

O fountain Arethuse,¹ and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius,¹ crowned with vocal
reeds,

That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

But now my oat proceeds,

And listens to the Herald of the Sea²

That came in Neptune's plea.

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,

What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?

And questioned every gust of rugged wings

That blows from off each beaked promontory.

They knew not of his story ;

And sage Hippotades³ their answer brings ;

That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed.

The air was calm, and on the level brine

Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.

It was that fatal and perfidious bark,

Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,

That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next, Camus,⁴ reverend sire, went footing slow,

His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,

Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge

Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.

"Ah ! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest
pledge ?"

Last came, and last did go,

The Pilot of the Galilean Lake ;

Two massy keys he bore of metals twain

(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).

He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :—

¹The rivers Arethusa and Mincius represent Greek and Latin pastoral poetry, Theocritus having been born in Sicily, and Virgil near the Mincius.

²Triton.

³Æolus, god of the winds.

⁴The river of Cambridge.

“ How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,

Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold !

Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how
to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !

What recks it them ? What need they ? They
are sped ;

And, when they list, their lean and flashy¹ songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw ;

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread :
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw

Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine² at the door

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian Muse,

And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowrets of a thousand hues.

Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,

On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,

That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.

¹insipid.

²A two-handed sword. What it typifies is left vague, but it may well be the Houses of Parliament.

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled :
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus¹ old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos, and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth :
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no
more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,

¹The "fabled Bellerus" stands for Bellerium, the Land's End. The "Vision of the guarded mount" is St Michael.

Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves ;

Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and
rills,

While the still morn went out with sandals grey :
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay ;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.¹

¹Commentators usually take this line as referring to Milton himself ; as though he said, "Now I have finished Lycidas, I will begin a new poem ; or start on my Italian journey." But it must refer to the "uncouth swain." He will seek "pastures new" because these others are too sadly associated with his friend.

A M A S K E

PRESENTED

At Ludlow Castle,

1634:

On Michaelmasse night, before the

RIGHT HONORABLE,

JOHN Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount BRACKLY,
Lord Præsident of WALES, And one of
HIS MAIESTIES most honorable
Privie Counsell.

*Eheu quid volui misero mihi! floribus austrum
Perditus*

L O N D O N

Printed for HUMPHREY ROBINSON,
at the signe of the *Three Pidgeons* in
Pauls Church-yard. 1637.

A MASK

*To the Right Honourable John, Lord Viscount
Brackley, son and heir-apparent to the Earl
of Bridgewater, etc.*

MY LORD,

This Poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a final dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the Author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the public view ; and now to offer it up, in all rightful devotion, to those fair hopes and rare endowments of your much - promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name ; and receive this as your own from the hands of him who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents, and, as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all real expression

Your faithful and most humble Servant,
H. LAWES.

*The Copy of a Letter written by Sir Henry Wotton
to the Author upon the following Poem*

From the College, this 13 of April, 1638.

SIR,

It was a special favour when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it and to enjoy it rightly ; and, in truth, if I could then have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr H., I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me with an extreme thirst), and to have begged your conversation again, jointly with your said learned friend, over a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together some good authors of the ancient time ; among which I observed you to have been familiar.

Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you dated the 6th of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith. Wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your Songs and Odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language : *Ipsa mollities*. But I must not omit to tell you that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed some good while before with singular delight ; having received

it from our common friend Mr R., in the very close of the late R.'s Poems, printed at Oxford : whereunto it was added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of stationers, and to leave the reader *con la bocca dolce*.

Now, Sir, concerning your travels ; wherein I may challenge a little more privilege of discourse with you. I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way ; therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr M. B., whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S. as his governor ; and you may surely receive from him good directions for the shaping of your farther journey into Italy where he did reside, by my choice, some time for the King, after mine own recess from Venice.

I should think that your best line will be through the whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa ; whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a Gravesend barge. I hasten, as you do, to Florence or Siena, the rather to tell you a short story, from the interest you have given me in your safety.

At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times ; having been steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this only man that escaped by foresight of the tempest. With him I had often much chat of those affairs, into which he took pleasure to look back from his native harbour ; and, at my departure toward Rome (which had been the centre of his experience), I had won confidence enough to beg his advice

how I might carry myself securely there without offence of others or of mine own conscience. "*Signor Arrigio mio*," says he, "*I pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* will go safely over the whole world." Of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your judgment doth need no commentary ; and therefore, Sir, I will commit you, with it, to the best of all securities, God's dear love, remaining

Your friend, as much at command
as any of longer date,

HENRY WOTTON.

Postscript

Sir : I have expressly sent this my footboy to prevent your departure without some acknowledgment from me of the receipt of your obliging letter ; having myself through some business, I know not how, neglected the ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand you fixed, I shall be glad and diligent to entertain you with home-novelties, even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle.

THE PERSONS

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of
THYRSIS
COMUS, with his Crew
THE LADY
FIRST BROTHER
SECOND BROTHER
SABRINA, the Nymph

The Chief Persons which presented were :

The Lord Brackley
Mr Thomas Egerton, his Brother
The Lady Alice Egerton

A MASK

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE,

1634, etc.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted
care,

Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats;
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand is ; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,

Took in, by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep ;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire
crowns

And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities ;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms :
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear
wood,

The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger ;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was despatched for their defence and guard.
And listen why ; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grapes
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds
listed,
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not
Circe,

The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine ?)
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering
 locks,
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus
 named,
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,
Excels his mother at her nightly art ;
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus ; which as
 they taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate
 thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human coun-
 t'nance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were.
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favoured of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods ; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps ; I must be viewless now.

*COMUS enters with a charming-rod in one hand,
his glass in the other : with him a rout of
monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild
beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their
apparel glistering. They come in making a
riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their
hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold ;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream :
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.

Rigour now is gone to bed ;
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move ;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :
What hath night to do with sleep ?
Night hath better sweets to prove ;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin ;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto,¹ to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns ! mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air !
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out ;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,

¹A Thracian goddess whose worship resembled that of Cybele.

The nice Morn on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loophole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure

Break off, break off ! I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees ;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish my mine art)
Benighted in these woods ! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains : I shall ere long
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight ;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes ; I fairly step aside
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY enters.

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,

My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers ; yet, oh ! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood ?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the grey-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far ;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps,
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller ?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,

Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
 Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear ;
 Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
 What might this be ? A thousand fantasies
 Begin to throng into my memory,
 Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names¹
 On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
 These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
 The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
 By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
 O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
 Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
 And thou unblemished form of Chastity !
 I see ye visibly, and now believe
 That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things
 ill

Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
 Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
 To keep my life and honour unassailed. . . .
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?
 I did not err : there does a sable cloud
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
 I cannot hallo to my brothers, but
 Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
 I'll venture ; for my new-enlivened spirits
 Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

¹This beautiful line was a second thought. The first form, as we learn from the Cambridge MS., was

“ And airy tongues that lure night-wanderers.”

Song

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's¹ margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well :
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That liketh thy Narcissus are ?
O if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the
Sphere !
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's har-
monies !

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's
mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment ?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled ! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,

¹A river in Phrygia.

And lap it in Elysium : Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself ;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign
wonder !

Whom certain these rough shades did never
breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest
song

Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.
Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that
praise

That is addressed to unattending ears.
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft
you thus ?

Lady. Dim darkness and this leafy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-
ushering guides ?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly
spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded,
Lady ?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit !

Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need ?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom ?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots ;
Their port was more than human, as they stood.

I took it for a faëry vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,

And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,

It were a journey like the path to Heaven
To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place ?

Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I
suppose,

In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley
green,

Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood.
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood ;
And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength ! Shepherd, lead
on. . . .

The Two BROTHERS

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint stars ; and thou,
fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,

And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
 In double night of darkness and of shades ;
 Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
 Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
 Of some clay habitation, visit us
 With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,
 And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,¹
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.²

Sec. Bro.

Or, if our eyes

Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
 The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
 Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
 But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister !
 Where may she wander now, whither betake
 her

From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and
 thistles ?

Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
 Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad
 fears.

What if in wild amazement and affright,
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
 Of savage hunger, or of savage heat !

Eld. Bro. Peace, brother, be not over-exquisite
 To cast the fashion of uncertain evils ;

¹In the Greater Bear.

²The Lesser Bear, which contains the pole-star.

For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid ?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion !

I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms
ever,

As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm
thoughts,

And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's
self

Oft seeks to quiet retirèd solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her
wings,

That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day :
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the midday sun ;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Bro. 'Tis most true

That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house ;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,

His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
 Or do his grey hairs any violence ?
 But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
 Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
 Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
 To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
 From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
 You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
 Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
 And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
 Danger will wink on Opportunity,
 And let a single helpless maiden pass
 Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
 Of night or loneliness it recks me not ;
 I fear the dread events that dog them both,
 Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
 Of our unowned sister.

Eld. Bro.

I do not, brother,
 Infer as if I thought my sister's state
 Secure without all doubt or controversy ;
 Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
 Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
 That I incline to hope rather than fear,
 And gladly banish squint suspicion.
 My sister is not so defenceless left,
 As you imagine ; she has a hidden strength,
 Which you remember not.

Sec. Bro.

What hidden strength,
 Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean
 that ?

Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden
 strength,

Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her
 own ;

'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity :

She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharboured heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds ;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.

Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time.

No goblin or swart faëry of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity ?

Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o'
the woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed
stone,

But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe ?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,

That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But when lust
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Bro. How charming is divine Philosophy !
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

Eld. Bro. List ! list ! I hear
Some far-off hallo break the silent air.

Sec. Bro. Methought so too ; what should it
be ?

Eld. Bro. For certain,
Either some one like us night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

Sec. Bro. Heaven keep my sister ! Again, again,
and near !

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Eld. Bro. I'll hallo

If he be friendly, he comes well ; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us !

*The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a
Shepherd*

That hallo I should know. What are you ? speak.
Come not too near ; you fall on iron stakes else.

Spir. What voice is that ? my young Lord ?
speak again.

Sec. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd,
sure.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis ! whose artful strains have oft
delayed

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,¹

And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.

How camest thou here, good swain ? Hath any
ram

Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?

How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook ?

Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next
joy,

I came not here on such a trivial toy

As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth

Of pilfering wolf ; not all the fleecy wealth

¹The next eighteen lines are rhymed. Masson suggests that "having spoken of the madrigals of Thyrsis, Milton wanted to prolong the feeling of pastoralism by calling up the cadence of known English Pastoral Poems."

That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.

But, oh ! my virgin Lady, where is she ?

How chance she is not in your company ?

Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without
blame

Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Ay me unhappy ! then my fears are true.

Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prithee
briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)

What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse

Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell ;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirsty wanderer

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast

Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage,
Charactered in the face. This have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade ; whence night by
night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.

Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill. But ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance ;
At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frightened¹ steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh ! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honoured Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear ;
And " O poor hapless nightingale," thought I,
" How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly
snare ! "

¹In all three printed editions. The Cambridge MS. in Milton's autograph has " drowsie flighted." Either reading gives good sense.

Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wished prey ;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here ;
But further know I not.

Sec. Bro. O night and shades,
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother ?

Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still ;
Lean on it safely ; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm :
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled :
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consum'd. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come,
let's on !

Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up ;
But, for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas ! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise ;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Eld. Bro. Why prithee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation ?

Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing ;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and harken even to ecstasy ;
And in requital ope his leathern srip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out.
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,

But in another country, as he said,
 Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil :
 Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
 Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon ;
 And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly
 That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave¹ ;
 He called it hæmony, and gave it me,
 And bade me keep it as of sovran use
 'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
 Or ghastly Furies' apparition.

I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
 Till now that this extremity compelled,
 But now I find it true ; for by this means
 I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
 Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
 And yet came off. If you have this about you
 (As I will give you when we go) you may
 Boldly assault the necromancer's hall ;
 Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
 And brandished blade rush on him, break his
 glass,
 And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
 But seize his wand ; though he and his curst
 crew

Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
 Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace ; I'll follow
 thee ;

And some good angel bear a shield before us !

*The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with
 all manner of deliciousness ; soft music, tables
 spread with all dainties. COMUS appears*

¹See 'Odyssey,' x. 281.

with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair : to whom he offers his glass ; which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

Comus. Nay, Lady sit. If I but wave this wand,

Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or as Daphne was
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast.

Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady ? why do
you frown ?

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger ; from these
gates

Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.

And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.

Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone¹

In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy ?

But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms ;

¹Polydamna was her name. See 'Odyssey,' iv. 219.

Scorning the unexempt condition
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
 That have been tired all day without repast,
 And timely rest have wanted ; but, fair virgin,
 This will restore all soon.

Lady.

'Twill not, false traitor !

'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
 That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
 Was this the cottage and the safe abode
 Thou told'st me of ? What grim aspects are these,
 These ugly-headed monsters ? Mercy guard me !
 Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul
 deceiver !

Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
 With vizored falsehood and base forgery ?
 And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
 With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute ?
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer ; none
 But such as are good men can give good things ;
 And that which is not good, is not delicious
 To a well-governed and wise appetite.

Comus. O foolishness of men ! that lend their
 ears

To those budge¹ doctors of the Stoic fur,
 And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
 Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence !
 Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
 With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
 Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
 Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
 But all to please and sate the curious taste ?

¹Surly : perhaps also with a reference to " budge " in
 the sense of fur, used on academic gowns.

And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-
haired silk,
To deck her sons ; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hatched the all-worshipped ore and precious
gems
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be
unpraised
Not half his riches known, and yet despised ;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, no. her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own
weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility :
The earth cumbered, and the wing'd air darked
with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought
diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below¹
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady ; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin ; must not be hoarded,
But must be current ; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself.

¹“ They below ” must be fishes or mermen.

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship ;
It is for homely features to keep home ;
They had their name thence : coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool,
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?
There was another meaning in these gifts ;
Think what, and be advised ; you are but young
yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my
lips

In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine
eyes,

Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor ! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store ;

And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid : for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven, amidst his gorgeous
feast.

But with besotted base ingratitude
Cramps, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I
go on ?

Or have I said enough ? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous
words

Against the sun-clad power of chastity
Fain would I something say ;—yet to what
end ?

Thou hast not ear nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity ;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not
know

More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling
fence ;

Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits,
To such a flame of sacred vehemence
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and
shake,

Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.
Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do
fear

Her words set off by some superior power ;

And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering
dew

Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no
more !

This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation.
I must not suffer this ; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood.
But this will cure all straight ; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and
taste. . . .

*The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest
his glass out of his hand, and break it against
the ground : his rout make sign of resistance,
but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT
SPIRIT comes in.*

Spir. What ! have you let the false enchanter
'scape ?

O ye mistook ; ye should have snatched his
wand,

And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,

We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.

Yet stay, be not disturbed ; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,

Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,

The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.

There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,

That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn
stream :

Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure ;
Whilom she was the daughter of Loctrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall ;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialled liquors heals :
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song ;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting

The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save !

Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus,
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys'¹ grave majestic pace ;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook ;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell ;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands ;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet ;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks ;

¹Tethys was the wife of Oceanus ; Nereus is a sea-god ; the " Carpathian wizard " is Proteus, who shepherded the flocks of Poseidon and gave oracles ; Leucothea from a mortal became a sea-goddess ; Thetis, the Nereid, was the mother of Achilles ; Parthenope (whose tomb was at Naples) and Ligea were Sirens.

By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance ;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save !

*SABRINA rises, attended by Water-nymphs,
and sings*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays :
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here !

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnarèd chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me,
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure,
I have kept of precious cure ;

Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip :
Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold ;
Now the spell hath lost his hold ;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

*SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out
of her seat*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmèd waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills ;
Summer drouth or singèd air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud ;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl, and the golden ore ;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady ; while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.

I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide ;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and beside
All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer.
Come, let us haste ; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

*The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and
the President's Castle : then come in Country
Dancers ; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT,
with the two BROTHERS and the LADY.*

Song

Spir. Back, shepherds, back ! Enough your play,
Till next sunshine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns, and on the leas.

*This second Song presents them to their
Father and Mother*

Noble Lord and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight ;

Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own.
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance.

The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ;
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring.
That there eternal Summer dwells
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard, and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purpled¹ scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)

¹Embroidered.

Beds of hyacinth and roses,
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,
 Waxing well of his deep wound,
 In slumber soft, and on the ground
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
 But far above, in spangled sheen,
 Celestial Cupid, her famed Son, advanced
 Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced
 After her wandering labours long,
 Till free consent the gods among
 Make her his eternal bride ;
 And from her fair unspotted side
 Two blissful twins are to be born,
 Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done,
 I can fly, or I can run
 Quickly to the green earth's end,
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend ;
 And from thence can soar as soon
 To the corners of the moon.

Mortals, that would follow me,
 Love Virtue ; she alone is free.
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the sphery chime ;
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.¹

¹This final couplet was inscribed by Milton in an album at Geneva belonging to a Neapolitan Protestant called Cerdogni or Cardouin.

—if Vertue feeble were
 Heaven it selfe would stoope to her.

Cœlum non animum muto dum trans mare curro

Junij 10, 1639. **KASHMIR UNIVERSITY**
JOHANNES MILTONIUS, Anglus.

Printed in Great Britain by the Thanet Press, Margate and London

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